

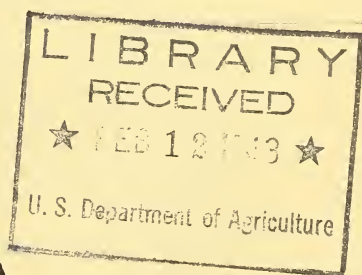
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THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY
and
ITS BEARING ON THE WAR

an address by
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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WASHINGTON

1942

FOREWORD

This is the second of a series of lectures on "War Issues and Postwar Adjustment," organized at the suggestion and mainly through the efforts of Dr. M. L. Wilson, Director of Extension Work, Department of Agriculture, and jointly sponsored by the Extension Service and the Graduate School. Dr. Edmund E. Day, President of Cornell University, gave the first lecture, "Primary Elements of the American Tradition." It is our hope that the ideas presented by these men who are eminently qualified to diagnose the current ills of the world will stimulate thinking and discussion among groups far beyond the original audience.

This lecture was delivered in the Department of Agriculture Auditorium on April 11, 1942. Dr. Wilson acted as chairman and introduced the lecturer. Dr. Taesch formerly taught philosophy at the University of Chicago, University of Iowa, and Tulane University. He was also formerly Professor of Business Ethics at Harvard. He is now Head, Division of Program Study and Discussion, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, in the Department of Agriculture.

ELDON L. JOHNSON,
Director.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY *and* ITS BEARING ON THE WAR

By CARL F. TAEUSCH

HISTORY itself is in a sense philosophy: it is the "bird's-eye view," the *Weltanschauung*, that the philosopher engages in. Thus, if we were to take all the events of the past and all of the accumulated knowledge of man—science, human behavior and relations, art, religion—all these things and events could be regarded as grist for the historian's mill. History and geography may be regarded as the time and space coordinates of all human and physical events. And yet, if one were to draw a map of all human experience and knowledge, and write across its face the word History—to denote the time when—and, across the other way, the word Geography—to denote the place where—there still would be left a certain unanswered question: *Why?* And this question would break up into those other questions that seem inevitably to bob up into the human mind: How did these things come about? *What for?* What does it mean? What about it? How much does it amount to? It is these questions—of causes, of purpose, of significance, of value—that constitute the objectives of philosophic study. And it is these questions with reference to the record of past events that develop into the, or a, Philosophy of History.

The historians themselves are not sure as a group whether they wish to pursue such questions, or whether they *should*—which latter is itself a philosophical problem. They quarrel among themselves as to whether history is, or should be made, a strict science, discovering and recording facts, events, "objectively" or "as they actually happened"—which latter again gets them into philosophy or even metaphysics; or whether the historian can or should discover causal connections, trends, implications, and perhaps even meanings in the course of human events. This fundamental issue among historians has not only introduced controversies which border on quarreling, but has more recently provoked a veritable Harvard-Columbia "brawl" between the respective adherents of these two essentially different points of view.

It will be our purpose, in presenting the case for the Philosophy of History, to approach the problem, not by another scientific view of history, nor by attempting to outline another philosophy of history; but rather to examine the way in which history has been written and then perhaps to discover, from this approach, what might be meant by the Philosophy of History. In other words, just as the historian views events and draws therefrom the materials he records; so shall we view the historian, his activities and results, to draw therefrom the materials we shall attempt to record and express. This second-hand, or twice-removed, reflective activity

is after all the primary function of philosophy: it is not the events of the world that concern him so much as it is the way in which people react to those events. And it is not so much the "facts" or "objective events" of the world that interest the philosopher of history, as it is the way in which the historian selected and connected and recorded those facts. The philosopher is like the spectator at a game, who watches the players and the sellers of peanuts and hot dogs; yes, who watches the other spectators also; and who has a sufficient sense of humor to appreciate the possibility that others may be watching him!

The struggle we are now engaged in is as much a war of ideas, of ideologies, as it is of material weapons. And one of the major ideological factors, especially as developed by the Axis powers, has been their interpretations of history and the dissemination of their ideas regarding so-called historic facts or trends. The wonder is not so much that such ideas could ever be concocted, but that so many people have believed them; it seems that anything printed on paper regarding an alleged historical theme carries unusual weight because some people seem to think that alleged historical facts cannot be disputed, that all statements which parade as history carry their own undisputed evidence, and that things and events so referred to cannot be criticized because "the past cannot be changed." Such gullible believers do not appreciate the fact that things may be asserted and believed without being historically correct, and that unfounded beliefs may be so fervently held, sometimes by powerful people, that they can be made to become true whether they were originally so or not.

A man originally named Schickelgruber, ignorant of history or biology, but become pathological by virtue of circumstances attending a defeated nation, can evolve from his feverish brain ideas which will catch the ears of a desperate people and lead to a world revolution and another world war. These ideas, appealing to the snobbery of race, may be rationalized by the most fantastic assertions about so-called biological facts; but they may be so cleverly directed as to utilize an ever-latent urge toward persecution. They may be directed against a scapegoat race upon which a people, itself obsessed with a persecution complex, could vent its spleen. These ideas, furthermore, could involve snobbish social-economic doctrines which would at first appeal to an ever-willing industrial-junker class to whip labor into subservience; and then could be made to appeal to a labor class already stark mad with fear in the face of an appalling and increasing amount of unemployment. And all of this ideology could be clothed in the doctrines which for over a century were being dinned into the ears of children and monarchs, a philosophy of history which allegedly destines the German people to become the masters of the world.

The means, of course, had also to be provided to effect the realization of these ideas. Guns had to be preferred to butter. But we must not lose sight of the fact that the whole propelling

force behind the use of these means and materials is an ideology which resolves itself to a philosophy of history as well as to a social doctrine. Those of us who see in this development a menace to the very fundamentals of our national existence, as well as to the heart of our democratic way of life, need to grasp the full significance of this menace. We may think the situation calls for meeting guns with guns, and so it does, immediately; but we need not thereby lose the war at the very beginning by wholeheartedly adopting the enemy's point of view. We may lash ourselves into formulating a competing set of ideas and descend as far into the depths of psychological depravity as has Goebbels. But we may thereby also lose the war before we have even begun to assert ourselves. It is to be hoped, however, that we preserve our sense of balance, our sense of humor, sufficiently to win both the war and the peace—not merely by penetrating critically the mental monstrosity foisted upon the world under the guise of a philosophy of history or a social ideology, but also by becoming fully conscious of the meaning of our own life purposes and social policies.

Let us then first approach this matter by critically examining not only the philosophy of history which apparently challenges the democratic way of life, but any philosophy of history which may attempt to assert itself. That is, rather than be caught within a framework of assumptions that there is a paramount philosophy of history and then find ourselves grappling with this or that particular philosophy of history in an attempt to assert our own, let us get beyond this whole framework of assumptions and, at the very start, question the possibility or validity of any philosophy of history itself.

At the outset, we meet two phases of the problem of history, the elementary character of which should not betray us into minimizing their significance. The problem is, just how "objective" should or can history be? On the one hand, should or can history simply record "facts," "scientifically" examined and selected? Was Mommsen right in asserting that "history is neither made nor written without love or hate"? And, on the other hand, who can best write history: the disinterested and removed observer, or one who has been in the thick of events, therefore presumably "knows the inside story," and may even have something to do with making his ideas become effective? Again, was Mommsen right when he said that "only an experienced statesman could write the history of Rome"? Moreover, history is not a very old occupation of mankind, and it has not been continuously the object of his interest. Man has not long been occupied with recording history, however long he may have been devoted to making it. True, history began with the ancient Greeks. It was also written—but not so well—by the Romans; but, until the period of the Renaissance, little attention was paid to history. Its beginnings in the Renaissance were in the form of chronicles or local histories—those of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, for example—

which may be questioned as history, because they were so restricted in time and space. This poses our first problem: Is a chronicle, or strict recital of often unconnected day-by-day events, of a small local community, written by an onlooker, history? Or, does history have to cover a wider field and a longer stretch of events to earn the name? Does it have to show the connection between events? By way of contrast, and to show that not even the fulfilling of these requirements may constitute acceptable history to some, consider the "world histories" that were being written at about the same time. Sir Walter Raleigh could be cooped up in a jail—like Hitler! and like Bunyan!—and have access only to a Bible; yet he could spin therefrom a "universal" history that covered the whole world, beginning with the Garden of Eden, and connecting all events on the basis of "one increasing purpose". Is this history? Does history require, in addition, a reflective analysis which neither the "universal" nor the "chronicle" type exhibits? To what extent does the critical examination of evidence enter into historic method before "events" are admitted across its threshold, or before "causal relationships" may be established among them?

This leads us to the second phase of this relatively elementary problem of history; namely, who is best equipped to write history? Is it the direct observer of the events? Is it a participant in them? Is it the "objective observer", who, far removed from the scene of action, examines carefully such bits of evidence of much earlier events that can be brought to him, an "observer" who may be basing his recordings on the observation of coins, bits of pottery, even bones, that ceased to function a thousand years ago? Is it necessary for a historian, even though removed in space and time from the events themselves, to do as Polybius did, walk the entire path that Hannibal followed, in order to observe the probable conditions under which the events occurred? Can a man like Theodore Roosevelt best write *The Winning of the West*; or Henry Clews, *Forty Years on Wall Street*? Or does history itself, let alone a philosophy of history, require that such recordings, direct to the point of intimacy, be subjected to the cold, glassy eye of critical review?

Here we are at the heart of the problem of the Philosophy of History, at least as Hegel, one of the most critical philosophers of history, saw it. Indeed, we are here at the heart of the beginnings of philosophy itself, the psychological principle enunciated by the early Sophists, "Man is the measure of all things". If the historian records what he "sees", science requires that some other scientific historian repeat and check the observation; but we can satisfy this requirement only if history or events repeat themselves—and that is a metaphysical and not a scientific assumption. Not only, therefore, is every history colored by the attitude of the historian, as Hegel long ago pointed out; but also, there is an even more basic assumption that the universe is rationally constructed and that events are the products of rational activity. Only

so could they be understood by a rational being. The "objectivity" of history, strictly speaking, becomes impossible, as well as unscientific, in view of the fact that only insofar as sympathetic insight can project itself into the understanding of human events—many of which are the product of rational purposes—can an adequate and penetrating history be written. The basic criterion of an adequate or penetrating history can never be set, because the most illuminating history—like Carlyle's genius—is "always an impossibility until it occurs".

History may, therefore, be said to become more philosophical, the more adequate and penetrating it becomes. Even so, this is not to say that the product is a Philosophy of History. History also becomes more scientific, the more adequate and accurate it becomes. Shall we say that it cannot become a science until it is able to predict events, or at least until it can employ empirical, experimental, and demonstrational methods? For, even without meeting these requirements, it is possible to develop a Philosophy of History, both as regards method and content, based primarily on the criterion of adequacy and supplemented by that of accuracy as a necessary but secondary condition.

Such a criterion enables us to allow all kinds of history to pass the reviewing stand for inspection: histories ranging from chronicle and simple narrative of isolated events, through those written from the physical or economic, religious or moral, sociological or political or military points of view, to those which, like Wells' or Spengler's, Hegel's or Buckle's or Adams', consciously attempt a comprehensive, universal, philosophical point of view. What do we discover as we view them in groups or types?

Following the very respectable histories of the early Greeks, respectable even when judged by modern advanced standards—Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius—and the distinctly prosaic productions of the Romans, there was a long period during which religion and morality were the prevailing points of view. Unfortunately, these histories did not even accurately portray contemporaneous events or the pragmatic developments of the categories of human behavior they purposely set out to present. They were largely embellishments of Old Testament material, colored with moralizing sentiments. A favorite subject was the fall of the Roman Empire, the most prevalent explanation of which revolved around the idea of immorality, an explanation not driven from the scene, as the villain of every plot, until Gibbon and Hume appeared. Indeed, Mommsen later questioned whether Rome even "fell"! He showed that the three centuries it took Rome to "fall" constituted a period of relative stability and tranquility.

What is most interesting about these religious-moral histories is their emphasis on the causal factor, one of the debatable points in historical method. It is impossible here to go into the problem of causation—which ranges from Leibnitz's "law of sufficient reason", that "everything is related to everything else", through its

more practical form of "laws of evidence", to Hume's skeptical attitude toward all "necessary connections". Suffice it to say, this concept of causation creeps into most philosophies of history, often surreptitiously, until it dominates their character by becoming a single explanatory factor for all kinds of events.

Why did Rome fall? "Because the Romans were bad people" is one answer; "because their hay production declined" is another. Why did the Greeks prevail at Salamis, or Why did Constantinople fall to the Turks? "Because the wind happened to blow in a certain direction". Why the rise of Germany? "Because of the dialectic of history". Why the decline of the Occident? "It is a part of an inevitable cycle". Why the genius of the Ancient Greeks? "A unique racial mixture", says one; "the gridiron configuration of their land", says another; "the leadership of outstanding individuals", says a third. The causal factor can become pragmatic. Mommsen could start out with an open-minded study of Rome, to discover why Rome lasted as long as she did, and later, as a member of the German Reichstag, introduce the effective elements he so discovered into the policies governing the reconstitution of Germany. Von Sybel could write a history of Germany centering all events about Protestantism and Prussianism, confusing historic observation and proposed policy, just as Guizot made Europe the center of world civilization and France the center of Europe. The economic interpretation of history becomes a confusion of shibboleths as to past events and of "open sesame" as to future policies. Can history teach us anything as to our future public conduct? If it can, what factors determined past events? Can they be consciously employed to determine the future? These are questions which a philosopher of history can ask legitimately, if he knows what he is doing. Unfortunately, too many self-styled "scientific" histories have unconsciously allowed these questions to color their attempts to discover what "actually" happened in the past.

It is not necessary to recite these instances to demonstrate that history, as it is written, reflects the predispositions of the historian and the atmosphere of the age in which it is written. The French Revolution is not a fact of the past. Even its first-hand records were colored by attitudes and circumstances. It provided the basis for a common hatred for France among most of the German historians of the Nineteenth Century—Sybel's remark, "French liberty is poison", providing a springboard for most of them to defend Prussian reactionary events. The French Revolution, as a fact, is still changing as various and successive kinds of illumination play upon it. Even the effects of the French Revolution affect it. Even modern "scientific" history, allegedly objective and factual, may be in large part the result of an "age of science", of the now prevalent "spirit of scientific method", and it may succumb to other methods when "science" is later regarded as a less adequate criterion of life. The dynamo has not only supplanted the Virgin as a propelling factor in men's lives; it also has become a new

criterion of individual conduct or of social behavior. The siege of Troy may produce an epic, written around the beauties of Helen, and be so accepted for centuries as an almost contemporaneous and, therefore, accurate record; but an age of industry and business may throw the cold blue light of the economic interpretation of history on this aesthetic-romantic episode and discover that the real, if prosaic, reason for bringing the beautiful Helen back from Troy was that the property rights of the Menelaus family were vested in her.

Nowhere does one discover more clearly the importance of point of view in the writing of history than in the past century or century and a half of German-produced history. As we stated before, the writing of history is not more than two centuries old, if we except the Ancient Greeks and Romans. And the German historians developed their fairly single-minded purpose practically during this entire period and have had a great deal to say and to do with the way in which modern history has been written. Hegel himself stood at the threshold of modern history. We have already referred to some of his methodological points, but the content of his history—which was far less able to pass critical examination—developed the idea that history involves a dialectic process, in the more recent phases of which Greece formed the thesis, Rome the antithesis, and Germany the synthesis of Western culture. The attitude was as arrogant as Guizot's similarly constructed history of France was supercilious, and it was followed by a whole series of powerful writers who elaborated much the same theme. Niebuhr, seeking the secret of Rome's strength, found it in the "orderly development by law" and in "the spirit of constitutionality" of the citizen, and applied it to German potentialities in the "evil time of Prussia's humiliation" by Napoleon. He distrusted and dreaded revolution and reacted against the internationalism inaugurated by the French Revolution, a movement which previously had disintegrated German nationality. Even recognizing the strict historical methods pioneered by Niebuhr, can his histories of Germany or of Rome be regarded as "objective"? His work was continued for another generation by Ranke, Sybel, Mommsen, and others of the "patriotic" school of historians. Ranke, accused earlier by Heine of "pasting together little painted pictures", soon became the foremost advocate of nationalism and the individual State. His pupil, Sybel, again connected history and politics, which, in the interests of scholarship, the master had insisted should be kept separate. These men not only taught other teachers, but also kings and emperors. It was here that the *Volksgeist*, the "old German customs", the local as well as nationalistic spirit—appearing even in the history of law, with Savigny—became embedded in both the popular and scholarly heritages of Germany. Prussianism and Protestantism were glorified. Then Treitschke sharpened the tradition with his added factors of Federation and Centralization, Militarism, and Anti-Semitism. As early as

1870, therefore, the minds of the German people were conditioned by a philosophy of history which needed little modification to provide a sufficient reason for their subsequent, especially their present, behavior.

We may seem to be centering our attention on the German developments of the philosophy of history to the exclusion of others. As a matter of fact, they have developed this field more than any other nation or people. But it would not be amiss to refer to developments in other countries as well.

Russia, for example, has developed a national policy resting primarily on a philosophy of the state. This, in turn, rests primarily on a philosophy of history, derived from Karl Marx and emphasizing the economic interpretation of history. Marx himself, it is interesting to note, derived his basic idea, the evolutionary conception of history, from Hegel. But, whereas the German historians emphasized the racial and political features of this thesis, elaborated in Hegel's concept of the *Volksgeist* (or spirit of a people), and asserted that the *Volksgeist* of the German people was the culminating representative of the *Weltgeist* (or spirit of the world) and that the German therefore best could act as world masters; Marx emphasized the importance of materialistic factors and their determining character. In his day, the writing of history had become fairly mature: it had outgrown the chronicle form and the religious or moral interpretation of events, and it was no longer concerned merely with observing the movement of military or political pawns across the chessboard of human events. History had begun to delve into the geographic factors that seemed basically to control human events; climate and its production of deserts or fertile areas, mountain barriers, and water transportation. But Marx saw that these factors, although powerful, were often remote from the events they may finally have effected and affected and that they were, therefore, less cogent than certain intermediate causal factors, such as the economic, or the technological, or even those legal and social artifacts that formed human institutions. He also saw remarkably clearly the implications of the industrial revolution, just then becoming apparent; he combined sentiment with science in asserting the place of prime importance to manual labor. He anticipated the rise of that powerful new social instrument, the business corporation. The Marxian doctrine, or, if you will, the Marxian philosophy of history, was absorbed in its entirety and promulgated almost intact by Lenin; and this doctrine was incorporated, by him and Stalin, into the foundation of Russian national policy after it had served as the mainspring of the Russian Revolution.

Time does not permit an adequate examination or criticism of the economic interpretation of history; nor can we go into the matter of determining whether policies, let alone actual events, in Russia have followed very closely the Marxian views or predictions. We cannot dispose of the situation easily by a few quota-

tions, but we cannot refrain from repeating Robert Louis Stevenson's remark that "Man lives not by bread alone; he lives by catch phrases." Another canny Scotsman remarked, "Let me write the songs of a people, and you may write their laws". Also, we may quote an economist, John Maurice Clark, and lift his remark from its context and use it in reference to any attempt at an exclusive economic interpretation of history: "Economists have a fairly long record of proving the impossibility of things that later came to pass." The economic interpretation of history, like any other single and narrow interpretation of human behavior, always faces the difficulty of not seeing all the things that happen in the course of human and social behavior, and of not taking into account all the motivations of human conduct. The history of Russia has not yet been finally written. We certainly do not now have enough evidence to pass final judgment as to her ultimate fate or the validity of the doctrine which now appears to prevail there.

We of the United States of America have nothing to compare with such social doctrines, nor have we had any comparable development of a philosophy of history. We have evolved a characteristic philosophy, Pragmatism, which, however, gives no similar turn, as have the German or Russian doctrines, to foreign or domestic policy. Even the science of history has not been developed in this country with the rigor and thoroughness of that of Germany or particularly that of Marx. Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis of the importance of the frontier comes nearest to an American philosophy of history. The pick-and-shovel nature of most recent history writing in this country has made it even less amenable to grandiose and sweeping generalities. Much the same observations may be made as regards Britain. Thus, the two great forces arrayed against the western front of Germany in the present conflict are not to be compared with her or her foe on the eastern front, in historical or social ideology. Our sense of humor alone would not permit us to attempt to vie with Germany in a contest on her own grounds; just as no German, seriously accepting the "superman" doctrine of Nietzsche, could even understand George Bernard Shaw's "Man and Superman", where Superman is—Woman!

What the United States of America has to offer in a life-struggle admittedly weighted heavily with ideas is no well-defined philosophy of history to be arrayed against one of the most highly developed systems of thought in that field, with the possible exception of the Russian ideology. We have made no thorough study of our own history which will some day be woven together into a pattern reflecting the variegated complex which we are. We have not yet fully developed our own philosophy, which, although already exhibiting a uniqueness and individuality in its expressed fragments, still is expressed largely, not in words or books, but in the living unvocalized behavior patterns of all of us.

In the very beginning of our national existence, we incorporated two ideological strands—those of the Renaissance and the

Enlightenment—into a physical mixture which has not yet reached the status of a chemical compound. The Renaissance, a period of “expansion,” physical, spiritual and artistic, was expressed in America in geographic discovery, exploration, and settlement. It appeared vocally in that ringing phrase of the Declaration of Independence—“life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”—and then again reverted to the behavior level as the pioneer pushed the frontier westward and made two blades of grass grow where one grew before. Its more recent forms have been “rugged individualism”, a great variety of religious sects, a humor characterized by exaggeration, inventive ability and technological improvements, and the ballads of mountain and river, plantation and prairie. The Enlightenment, a period of “perfectionism”, was expressed in America in more restricted fashion. It produced our legal, economic, and theological metaphysics, vocally appeared in the Constitution of the United States—aimed at “a more perfect Union”, substituting “property” for “happiness”—and has generated such a sense of “law and order” as we have, transformed our humor into understatement, set the Colonial and Georgian tone to our architecture, and is now even disciplining our art and music.

It is the simultaneous interplay of these two very different cultural points of view in the people of the United States of America that is something new in the world. The Renaissance was followed and supplanted by the Enlightenment in Europe—it did not there persist in almost equal strength as it has in America—and both in Europe gave way to still another point of view. Even the spirit of the Industrial Revolution, which pretty well then engulfed Britain, reached the United States of America too late to become even now more than another undigested factor in our national life. We formulate a “Good Neighbor Policy” so as to provide a common basis of interest among our fellow American republics, before we have become fully conscious of the large part played by Latin blood and culture within our own national confines. No nation could so balance or confuse Renaissance and Enlightenment, or Teuton and Latin and Slavic cultures, in the same people, in the same individual, and often in the same breath, and at the same time formulate a coherent philosophy of history comparable with that of Germany. In contrast with successive European cultures, those of the United States have been retained longer, until they all form a composite set, often contradictory in character.

But that is all the more reason for asserting that the present struggle is not going to be decided on the basis of which side has the more coherent philosophy of history. Indeed, the roots of the present struggle run so deep that not having a philosophy of history may weight the scales against the greatest conceivable intensity with which a trumped-up national ideology or a ration-

alized philosophy of history may be developed by the other side in the conflict.

The behavior and ideological complex which is the United States goes far deeper than the more recent manifestations of Renaissance and Enlightenment, and with even greater evidences of inconsistency or conflict. Here are Jew and Christian in business at the same market place; Latin and Teuton tilling adjacent fields—and witness the way in which Spanish water law and English common law met head-on in western Nebraska, with the victory of an arid Spain over a wholly inappropriate law derived from soggy England. Puritan New England once met Cavalier Virginia and Carolina in a bitter fraternal struggle, and for a while she alone wrote the histories for all of the peoples, many of which she did not understand. But, even deeper yet, going back to the very sources of the human race, the American farmer still is held suspended between a fatalistic view of life, on the one hand, engendered by limited soil and water resources and the unpredictable and uncontrollable vagaries of the weather; and, on the other hand, our typical pragmatic attitude, engendered by a conquering of the wilderness and the breeding of plants and animals toward a definitely planned purpose—a pragmatism which also cannot understand why, on the basis of our experience with fixing farm machinery, we cannot equally well “fix” a broken-down economic system. Here is a conflict, or a mixture, if you please, of two of the most important elements of what Levy-Brühl called pre-logical thinking. Here, in the American people, is real earthiness of mind, and yes, also at war with itself: here is the totem idea, taking part in the inevitable but not attempting to change anything, bedfellow with the medicine man, shaking his dry bones to cure, and powing and wowing to make it rain. And the fact that we are still so close to the soil as that, and have caught up in our behavior those strains of civilization appearing in European culture as late as the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, gives promise of a basic stability and resilience, a basis for resistance that no other people can have who are propelled merely by a makeshift ideational pattern, even if it purportedly is intended as an index of blood and iron. Any people who can internally sustain such conflicting elements as do we of the United States of America, in our thought, as well as in our behavior—any such people have the basis for a far superior survival value than those who appear to be sustained by uniform but ephemeral doctrines and panaceas.

A digression may illustrate the point. A study of the concept of “usury” and a tracing of the history of the idea discloses some interesting things. How can a practice, charging interest and even relatively high rates of interest, generally persist in the face of almost 1500 years of church antagonism formulated into an almost unanswerable doctrine? Schumpeter has, to my notion, put his finger on the essential point: those who fulminated against usury

and wrote books on the subject never came in contact with its more prevalent and justifiable—commercial—usages; while, on the other hand, those who engaged in the practice “neither pondered nor wrote”. So that not only was the issue practically never joined; but when it was joined, the behavior factors routed the ideological. This is not to say that ideas played no part in the present status of the idea or practice of “usury”, or that those ideas expressive of the sounder practices may not affect the practices. But, to swing the analogy to the problem of the philosophy of history in the present struggle, it does not follow that an ideological pattern, however well formulated into language and hammered out into a well-defined and tightly-knit structure, necessarily has a competitive or combative or survival value superior to that of an amorphous, variegated, adaptable, even inconsistent behavior pattern, which apparently at present constitutes the United States of America.

The nearest approach to a philosophy of history, comparable with that of Germany and Russia, yet attained by the United States of America or by Britain, is the economic interpretation first formulated by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*. A product of the Deism current in his day and of Newtonian mechanics, the *laissez-faire* doctrine was accepted in England and America as a composite of liberal politics and economic individualism. It subsequently incorporated biological doctrines, especially Darwinian evolution, and industrial and technological developments, into the views familiar to all of us who lived through the 1920's. But Adam Smith now appears to us in the broader historic perspective as the representative of merely an episode, a reaction against lingering mediaeval commercial practices; and, even though he himself presented a broader analysis of the situation than have most of his followers and admirers, and though much of what he wrote is still pertinent to modern social-economic conditions, the social doctrines asserted today to have been expressed or implied by him are at best an inadequate account of human society, or of its history, let alone what our human society may become. Those who attempt to assert that the doctrine formulated therefrom is an accurate or adequate social philosophy, or philosophy of history, not only have no conception of the many more factors that enter into our ideological make-up, but also fail to realize that our strength may not even lie in such ideological fields.

In brief, what we of America—and this includes Britain, as well, even if we characterize her behavior as “muddling through”—what we of America have, to oppose a German philosophy of history, admittedly superior in respect to its coherence and cumulative strength, is not another philosophy of history, but rather a way of living transcending all questions as to kind of philosophy of history or degree of intensity with which it may have developed. To say that brawn and tanks, food and gas, rather than ideas, will

win the war, may be true. Those who say these things may be nearer the truth than they themselves even realize or imply. For we, as a nation, have not yet reached the ideological stage—if formulated words are to be regarded as ideological indexes. But to assume that, therefore, we have no mode of behavior that can match the ideological perfections of Germany is to miss the point altogether. This mistaken assumption is on a par with our too prevalent attitude of trying to figure out what Hitler is going to do next, and then attempting to meet him on his chosen ground. The spirit of America, once it becomes vocal, will choose its own mode of behavior and will throw upon Hitler the burden of wondering what we are going to do next. Neither the whole gamut of our much-vaunted educational system nor even our churches have yet succeeded in performing their supreme intellectual and spiritual function of providing an ideological pattern which expresses that mode of behavior which is ours as a nation and as a people, with all our local differences and varying intensities. Even less have our intellectual and spiritual leaders evolved an ideological pattern which can operate functionally in the very warp and woof of that behavioristic development, and determine our policies and behavior. The main strength of our nation, like that of Russia and China, resides in the rank and file of our common people, our farmers and our factory workers, who, saying little, are quietly providing the materials which are winning the war. Their thoughts, so far as I can determine, constitute the best basis for writing an enduring peace.

Walter Hines Page once had a bout with two English friends on the question, Where and when would you rather have lived than now and here? The answers to such a question are perhaps a better expression of a philosophy of history than are learned treatises on the subject. "In Florence, in the Renaissance", said one; or was it in Athens, at the time of Pericles? "In London, in Elizabeth's reign", said another; or was it in Rome in the Augustan Age? When they turned to Ambassador Page, he expressed his choice: "In the United States of America, centuries in the future!"

